

I N S P I R A T I O N .

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Inspiration, - literally a breathing of new thought and life into a human being, - is as old as the human race. And what a fascinating subject for most people! Speak of it and instantly one's thoughts turn to supernatural agencies, to visions of angels, to the insistent power of the still small voice and to times in his own life when his heart was strongly warmed and his mind on fire with an almost irresistible impulse to action, induced by a clear intellectual light that comes almost inexplicably from, - no one knows where.

Theologically, Inspiration means a divine influence working in man's soul by which he is qualified to receive and teach divine moral and religious truth with authority. Ordinarily, and in the profane sense, the word means the act of exercising an elevating, stimulating, influence on the intellect and emotions of man. The physiological meaning we shall not consider.

In our study of this theme let us first turn to a few historical examples. As our eyes travel slowly backward up the battle scarred slopes of the ages past, while our minds are searching for examples of inspired lives, to nearly every one will come the thot of the tragic history of God's chosen people, - the Israelites; and of those rugged, upright, unyielding, yet whole-souled, warm-hearted men, their prophets, doomed, almost without exception, by the very fact of their divine inspiration, to persecution, exile, prisons, torture, and to martyr's deaths. These men were not of the wealthy class. They were not courtiers. They were not politicians. They were not lovers of ease. But they were men, either trained in the school of the prophets, or men called by God from the humbler walks of life to declare his will to the people, and often to deliver them. They were

men who denied themselves; who stood alone, often compelled to wander in the deserts as exiles and outcasts; men of strength, of mental force, of simple and upright character. Having such general characteristics let us take especial notice of some of their number.

First, and towering above them all, rises the exalted figure of the great lawgiver, - Moses, a man brought up in the luxurious schools of the Egyptian Court, trained perhaps to be the future ruler of that mighty kingdom, yet moved by the native nobility of his heart to cast his lot with his oppressed countrymen, and by this choice banished to a shepherds life in the wilderness, whence he came forty years later a man characterized by meekness and self-abasement, yet exalted to speaking face to face with the Creator himself. A man who gave his people, under God's inspiration, the grandest code of laws, spiritual and temporal that the world has ever known. Moses is the pre-eminent example of the divinely inspired man.

Of the twelve great prophets of Israel mentioned in sacred history, as well as the numerous lesser lights, we can sketch only a few here. Samuel, the upright judge, who in his boyhood was a page in the Lord's house and later the establisher under Gods direction, of the monarchy, was a man of peace whose heart and ear was constantly open to the inspirations sent by Jehovah. The one fact that strikes us first in thinking of Samuel's life is, that from his birth he was set apart for one service in life and all his training was along religious lines. But the prophet that stands next to Moses in the magnitude and difficulties of his work is Elijah, that rugged, roughly clothed, daring, opposer of Idolatry, and of wicked kings and princes. Again and again, under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit he met his enemies and triumphed for the Lord. But we may not take up the lives

of these men in detail. Passing swiftly over the roll of honor we notice the heroic Isaiah, standing almost alone for God in the midst of a sin-loving, hostile people, supported by the inspiring power of the Heavenly Father. We think again of his vision by the altar when the angelic messenger touched his lips with the coal of heavenly fire. And we think too how few were those who were his friends, and of his martyr's death. Within a century after Isaiah we notice Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, a man of sorrows, but one who stood like a rock for the right.

The lives of these men are typical of the influence of divine inspiration and serve as examples of the theological phase of our definition, for who could have lived and struggled as they did against the great majority without the aid of the inspiring Spirit of the Master of the Universe. But let us add another. Six hundred and some years later than Jeremiah we come upon the life of St. John, the disciple nearest the Christ's heart during his life, and the one who gave us under inspiration, the gospel of Love and the Divine Revelation. We find him in exile on a lonely island, yet there it was in such unlikely surroundings that the last sublime revelation of God's will, and of the Future was given to man.

We shall take one other life record from the history of the Middle Ages as given by Michelet. One about whom the general facts are well known, but whose real history is for the most of us an un-analyzable mass of vague impressions, - Jehanne the Pucelle, - The Maid of Orleans, commonly known as Joan of Arc, whose singular and tragic career began January 6th, 1412, at the little village of Dom Remy in Eastern France. This village lies in what was then a march of Lorraine whose inhabitants owed allegiance to the king only. Since they dwelt between the territories of powerful feudal lords

their country had been for many years, - even centuries, the battle
 ground of hostile armaments. And because the king was weak these poor
 people could rely upon God only, for protection. The great forests of
 the Vosges within a short distance of the village were held from
 ancient times to have been sacred as the haunt of fairies, nymphs, and
 Satyrs. And the old heathen shrine tree near by a fountain, known as
 the "Fairies' Tree", yet existed and so strong were the heathen tra-
 ditions and superstitions that the curate of the village annually
 said a mass there to keep away the evil spirits. Then too, in a
 country which for centuries had been harrowed by cruel war, heroic
 poems, legends and romances abounded. Here Jeanne was brought up in
 a pure simple style of life, taught to care for the household, as other
 girls were, but reading and writing were never included in her train-
 ing and her religion and knowledge of sacred things she drank in from
 infancy in story and legend and precept given her by her mother, by
 word of mouth. Nurtured in such an atmosphere of faith and romance
 it is but natural that her imaginative powers should be wonderfully
 developed and it is said of her that she never knew pain or sickness
 such as is common to the lot of women, and that she retained the simple
 trusting, exalted spirit of childhood to her last day. As Wordsworth
 says, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy", and it is not strange
 then that this pure, simple maiden, retaining the spiritual insight
 of childhood and inspired by the legendary prophecy of Merlin that a
 Pucelle of the marches of Lorraine would deliver the realm from the
 foreign tyrant, should see a vision and hear a voice at mid-day, in a
 blaze of light, in her thirteenth year. Again two years later the
 angel appeared to her and commanded her to go to the king and restore
 his kingdom to him. But many difficulties were in the way, and in
 her doubt and fear she was comforted by a vision of sainted women,

and heavenly voices continued to inspire her with courage and wisdom to the end of her life. The well known history of her public service we will not recount, - merely wishing to give a few salient points in her early life and environments. It is not possible for us to say with certainty that these visions and voices actually appeared to her extraneously. But from history and such biographies as we have it is certain that the visions did come; either as subjective mental states or as extraneous, objective realities.

We have cited in Joan of Arc one who was, perhaps, the last great example of a religiously inspired life, in the old sense of the term. May we now turn to a more modern form of so-called inspiration, one with which, perhaps, we are more familiar at first hand. I speak of Mediumship as believed in by Spiritualists and others. Nearly allied to it but more realistic and fundamental is the phenomenon of double personality, so often made apparent under hypnotic influence and which is evidently, in many cases, the real base and substance of the Mediumistic manifestations. The medium in order to become inspired invariably goes into a trance, generally self-induced, and as Prof. James says, it seems to be done in most cases just because the company is expecting it, and to keep up an established reputation. When the trance is complete the medium usually passes under the control of the spirit of some deceased person who makes an introductory speech, through the medium, as mouthpiece, and then transmits messages from a number of spirits in the unknown world to some of those present. As regards those messages received by mechanical and material means, such as spirit writing on slates, etc., they have almost universally been proven to be fraudulent. But when we attempt to sift out the true state of things in the mind of the medium, as manifested by oral com-

munications we are indeed at a loss to know on what to place the stamp of truth and which to brand as false, - for who among men can look on the secrets of the human heart. Yet as stated above many of these manifestations exhibit good evidence of more than the ordinary powers of mortal man. This one thing, however, must be true of all Mediums, - their minds must constantly be more or less occupied with speculations on the nature of their own claims and experiences. Undoubtedly some of these cases of double personality and mediumship are, we would say, genuinely inspired, but from whence, or why we can not tell.

From our own observations on one medium, and from Baysrd Taylor's, "Confessions of a Medium", also the report of the Seybert Commission on Spiritualism, as well as numerous magazine articles written by persons who have investigated individual cases, we cannot but conclude that the trance is a sort of hypnotic phenomenon, either self-induced by a passive concentration of the mind on one object, or brought on by yielding the mind and will to the control of some one with a strong magnetic personality. We also think that the voices and spiritforms which pass through the mediums brain and are given utterance by him, are his own fancies, embodied by his imagination, or the subject matter which is passing through the mind of the magnetic person who induced the trance. In other words the mind of the medium has passed in large measure from the control of his will and is passively receptive to whatever comes along, good and evil alike. In truth it is a dissipation of the mind and soul, having effects similar to that of whiskey-drinking on the body.

So far we have dealt with those forms of inspiration which have to do with the spirit world and the soul of man, and with religion. What general facts can we see in the lives reviewed and the conditions that obtain? In the lives of the prophets of

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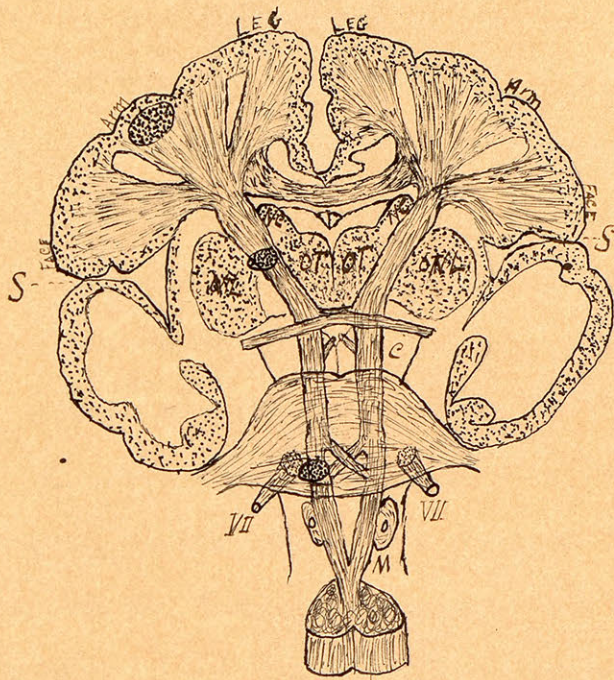
tions set forth? In the lives of the prophets of Israel, and in St. John we notice that the times of their inspirations, and in some cases almost their whole lives, were periods of loneliness, of separation, of social ostracism almost. Then too they were men of intense self-denial, and in looking over their histories one is compelled to admit that there was more than mortal power shown in their lives. Their human faculties were not suspended by the inspiration, neither reduced to mere machinery in the hands of a powerful Master, but rather strengthened and intensified and put to pure and exalted service. From the study of their lives one must conclude that there is a Supreme Being, an Almighty Creator, who guided and shaped their destinies.

Joan of Arc represents a middle type between the Prophet and the Modern Medium. With her, as Michelet says, the celestial ever absorbed and barred the worldly from earliest childhood, and made her peculiarly fitted to receive spiritual impressions. Her habits of piety and her early training among such romantic, inspiring, environments undoubtedly had a deep influence on her spiritual condition. As to modern spiritualistic phenomena we can only say that many of its so-called material manifestations are downright deceptions, performed by jugglery and sleight of hand, - and this has been proved in numberless cases. However, there are many psychic phenomena connected with it that are little understood, as for example, the cases of clairvoyance allied with certain conditions of the trance state. One thing however is certain, and that is that continued indulgence in the trance breaks down one's will power and leaves the individual defenseless against many evils that present themselves to his mind during the passive period. Does not this latter fact explain the prevailing low moral and physical standards of the devotees of spiritualism?

We have tried to give a brief historical review of religious inspiration as gathered from the pages of history and from the lives of men now living. We have not mentioned the inspiration that comes to Godly men, in holy living and in the contemplation of recorded divine truth, such as came to Wesley, Whitefield, Spurgeon, and Moody, and which comes today to many a Christian of our own land. But let us ~~to~~ turn to an interesting and practical study of Inspiration as it is found in our every day life. There is a side of our subject set forth in the second part of our definition which appeals strongly to us in this practical age of intense living, i e. the act of exercising an elevating stimulating influence on man's intellect or emotions, - a phase comparatively unthought of by the most of us.

Inspiration, as we shall now consider it, may be defined as a sudden impulse to action, or the sudden irruption of a new and much sought idea into our stream of consciousness; brought about by some mysterious agent, whose more-or-less long continued action culminates without warning in a nervous discharge which may take a pre-desired course or may dart through channels scarcely ever used, and which often brings strange and startling results.

In order that we may understand something of the process of thought and of the way in which the inspiration breaks in upon us, it will be necessary for us to describe what psychologists term, "The Stream of Consciousness", and a little of the internal arrangements of the brain. Let me first ask, "Is your mind ever vacant in your waking moments?" And you must answer "No." It cannot be. Thoughts are constantly coming and going. The words and images which are before your mind now, constituting what we call a, "State of Mind", are constantly giving way to others. You can not even hold the same idea before your mind unchanged for any length of time. New recollections and associa-

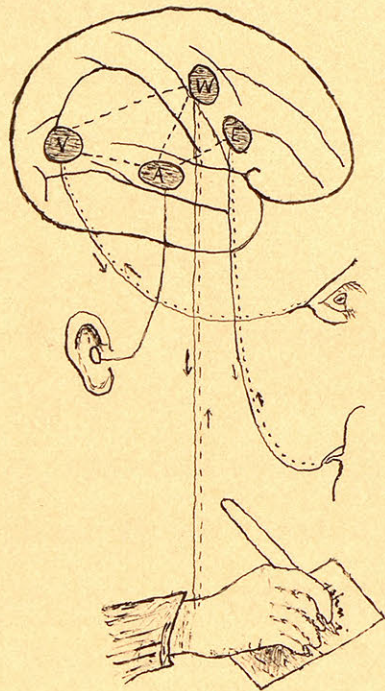


Transverse section of the human Brain through the Rolandic region. S, fissure Sylvius, NC, nucleus caudatus, and N.L., nucleus lenticularis, of the corpus striatum; T, thalamus; C, crus; M, medulla oblongata; VII, the facial nerves passing out from their nucleus in the region of the Pons. The fibres passing between N.L. and OT. constitute the so-called internal Capsule. The fibres also show the connections, in part, of the various cortical Centers.

... from Jones.

tions cluster about it, constantly altering your conception of the central idea and your attitude toward it. These constantly changing states of mind, - this never ending flow is termed the "Stream of Consciousness."

Let us now turn for a moment to the brain itself, that wonderful mass of soft gray and white tissue which is the seat of that mysterious thing, - the Ego, or soul of man, and which is the factory and directing center of thoughts and through them, the Chief Engineer of the body. But what is the process by which thoughts are made? We do not pretend to be able to answer that question satisfactorily. We can only sketch the merest outline of the work. The end organs of the peripheral nerves pick out certain vibrations, or qualities from the things about us and these are classed by our six senses as Sight, Sound, Smell, Taste, Touch or Temperature and the report is sent in to the brain over the afferent nerves which for the most part pass into the cerebellum, from whence the news is carried to the higher thought centers in the cerebrum. We use the word "centers" advisedly for not all the brain takes part at once in the thought-functions. The brain functions are to a great extent localized. For example it is well known that the Cerebellum, the Medulla, and the spinal Cord have direct charge of the vital processes of the body and are the ultimate centers for outgoing motor orders. Many of our necessary daily acts are attended to here in the reflex centers without ever coming into our consciousness at all, when once the habit is fixed. So in the Cerebrum, the seat of mental activity, there are localities set apart to attend to one particular class of reports in the main, - one for sight, one for sound, one for taste, etc. The accompanying drawings show some of these centers, all of which are intimately connect-



Schematic drawing of the brain showing the action of the
 main centers concerned in written and articulated language,
 and incidentally the fact that it takes the united action of
 many centers to make up a state of Consciousness. V, is the
 visual center; W, the center governing the hand; A, the auditory
 center; E, the center of speech.

... from Ross.

ed by innumerable, interlaced, threads of nerve tissue? Plate II shows the manner in which the centers work together in producing speech. You may wonder what connection all this has with our subject. We only ask you to bear in mind the facts here shown that not all of the brain is concerned in receiving nerve messages from the end organs of one sense, and that our thoughts are made by the combined action of all the centers concerned with the subject matter. Hence it is possible that while our consciousness is occupied on one thing or set of things, processes may be going on in these centers by which a new and startling thought may be born, - our inspiration in fact.

Bearing in mind what kind of inspiration we are now dealing with let us ask what this inspiration is like, how it comes, and why. In order to answer these three questions as best I may let me ask you, frankly, Did you ever have an inspiration? They are peculiar experiences. Like lightning, you never know where, or when, or who they will strike. Down deep in the tiny cells of the gray tissues of your brain, where delicate sensory nerves have their endings, - so minute that it takes a powerful microscope to see the slender threads, and where the motor nerves have their origin, subtle and mysterious forces are at work. All the vital processes of life and thought are being carried on by that busy brain. Messages are being sent over the intricately woven network of nerves; decisions are being made here and there in the various centers, all dealing with the messages being brought in over thousands of tiny wires coming from the peripheral nerve organs. In short it is as busy a place as the telegraph corner of the Board of Trade, in Chicago. All unnoticed in some idle corner a little report is thrown down. It may have come from the world outside, or from some other overworked center within, and is not noticed

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in the confusion. Soon another tiny flash falls on those same cells, then another and another, - imperceptible to our consciousness, yet strong enough when united to begin to work on the sensitive cells about, until, like the submerged mines of naval warfare, a charge of neural energy is placed beneath a cerebral center, - the trains are laid, the hidden activity reaches the threshold of consciousness, a last tiny impelling message flashes over the wires and behold, - a new light bursts in on our field of thought - a mighty charge of nervous force rushes over the path of least resistance and we have our inspiration, of thought or deed. And in the final outcome every nervous discharge results in action, either internal or spending itself upon our environment.

The inspiration may be the result of intense mental search for the all-desired answer to some question, or it may come along lines not directly sought. In either case the unseen forces work unknown to us. Their energy is gathered from sources not known. But the final explosion takes that nerve channel pointed out by the thinker's state of mind, by his habits, and by his strength or weakness of character. We see here what determines in large part the course of action one will follow under the inspiration of the moment, for habit well-grounded holds its subject with a death-like grip.

What then are the advantages of inspirations? Why are they desirable? We have seen from the brief description above that the inspiring thought, solution or whatever it may be, is practically worked out in the lower centers without the attention of our consciousness and hence these centers are working freely and untrammelled by conscious effort on our part, therefore much more likely to reach a true conclusion. I would not say that every inspiration should be blindly

followed as a true guide, for the right and the wrong of them must depend on the good or evil bent of the man to whom they come. To the wholesome, pure, and industrious mind I hold they are sent of God, for every good thing, we are told, cometh down from the Father of all, and that they are often a blessing I think every one can testify from his own experience. Many a man has saved his life by acting on an inspiration; others have grasped great truths and given them to men. Still other have thus made great inventions which have helped to lift the world to a higher plane, - Yes, and even we may use our inspirations to solve the knotty questions of every day and to brighten and smooth the rugged paths of life for our fellowmen, and for ourselves. Then let us ask what type of mind is most likely to receive inspirations and can we put ourselves in an attitude to receive them?

The types of mind are classified by Tichener as follows:

- 1st. The Choleric mind which thinks quickly and feels strongly.
- 2nd. The Sanguine which ^{thinks} quickly and feels weakly.
- 3rd. The Phlegmatic mind, which thinks slowly and feels weakly.
- 4th. The Melancholic mind, - thinking slowly and feeling deeply.

In choosing from the four types given, the one most susceptible to inspirations, we unhesitatingly pronounce the first named, the Choleric mind, to be that one. What though a man is hasty and liable to mistakes. He can learn by experience. And it is far better to do something and be an active factor in the world of progress than to be a slow thinking and unfeeling man who weighs his deeds so carefully in the balance that they are over balanced by his fears and never performed. "But", you say, "not all men can have the choleric type of

mind." True, yet whatever tendencies one does have in that direction can be cultivated. It now remains to be seen whether we can put ourselves in an attitude favorable to receiving inspirations. As a partial answer we ask you to remember what the medium does in his trance. In it the conditions are a submissive passivity of mind, will, and body, and an expectant waiting for what is to come. So may we in like manner prepare for inspirations by getting our bodies into good physical condition, and it is most likely, that so far as the body is concerned, it would be best that that it should not be in active exercise, as this distracts the minds attention and lessens the brain's supply of blood. As to the mental conditions, if we have a difficult line of thought on which we wish an inspiration, perhaps the best course of action would be to think vigorously on the subject for a time and then allow the mind to sink into a state of comparative passivity and wait for results, somewhat as the medium does. In this as in nearly all affairs of life, health and vigor are of prime importance.

Although we have dropped the distinctively religious phase of the subject, a question arises here in connection with preparing to receive inspirations, even those of everyday. And that question is, "What does conscience have to do with getting in the proper attitude?" We answer, "Much," It is possible for one to sear his conscience so that even murder will not bring any great remorse, nor disturb his peaceful slumbers, save as they may be interrupted in order to elude the officers of the law. But such a condition means that many of the man's finer sensibilities are so blunted and effaced that the subject has lost the keen perception and sensitiveness necessary to receiving an inspiration. Then if one's conscience is not so hardened it behooves him to keep it clean, for who can be at his best with the

sting and worry of a guilty conscience continually pestering him.

Leaving the question of conscience let us dwell a moment on the influence of environment. In looking over the cases cited from history we notice that every one dwelt more or less alone with nature; either from choice or from necessity, and in seclusion they drew on those rich fountains of strength on finds in solitude. Yet when they were called upon to touch the lives of men in fierce action, the strength of their inspiration did not fail. The early training of each and the historic surroundings among which their lot was cast undoubtedly moulded their lives and characters into fit subjects for the inspiring spirit.

And now in bringing the disjointed threads of our thought into a terminal knot we would remind you of the ground we have traversed. We have taken a brief glance at the work of Moses, trained for forty years in the wilderness; we have mentioned Samuel's childhood devoted to one service; we have thought of Elijah as he listened to the still small voice in the cave of Mt. Horeb; we have read how Isaiah's lips were touched by heavenly fire; we have seen how grief and sorrow were harmonized with unyielding courage in a righteous cause in Jeremiah; we have listened to the divine strains of the beloved disciple on the barren island of Patmos; we have examined the childhood days of the Maid who delivered France; we have pictured the methods of the spiritualistic medium and his probable motives, with the evils springing from the consequent relaxation of his will-power; we have then turned to a new phase of our subject and have touched on the stream of consciousness, the organization of the brain functions, and our theory of how an ordinary inspiration is born. Having done this we look again at the advantages and desirability of Inspirations. Concluding that we wish to use them in our own lives, we have arranged the types

of human minds under four classes and decided that the Choleric temperament is most apt to feel the breath of inspiration. Following this decision we have reviewed some favorable conditions of body, and mind, and conscience, and looked at the influence of environment. One thing yet remains to be done, - to ask, "Are inspirations irresistible"? Some hold that by our definition the thing must stir us to action, must have its way, must take effect in our lives, or it is not an inspiration. But we can not see it thus. All the physiological process has taken place. The new idea is there and by our definition it must be there in great strength. If it does not result in action it can only be because of powerful inhibitions, - such as contrary habits and indecision ingrained in the man. He may be schooled to excessive caution and given to calculating final results. By the time these ceremonies are gone through with the initial energy of the inspiration is spent and doubts arise, - nothing is done.

Inspirations are not irresistible and may we not, fellow-traveler, heed the warning given by John J. Ingalls in his sonnet, "Opportunity", and make use of our good inspirations, which lift us nearer the bow of promise, and aid us to dull the thorns of life's roses and macadamize the mudholes in the highway of existence.

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